Linguistics

Linguistics is the scientific study of language, its structure and function as a means of communication, its acquisition, and the mental and physiological processes involved in its use. Knowledge of the structure, origins, and functions of language can provide deep insight into human nature and behavior. The major in linguistics prepares students for professional studies in law, medicine, technology, data science, education, and business, as well as for graduate work in linguistics, cognitive science, and related disciplines.

Through their Linguistics courses, students will learn about language as a complex system with formal, cognitive, social and physical aspects. Students will explore the deep commonalities and systematic variation among diverse languages and speakers, as observed at multiple levels of linguistic organization, including sounds, words, sentences and discourses. Linguistics students will learn how the scientific method is used to develop theories based on empirical evidence, and refine their ability to communicate the scientific understanding of language and linguistic theories in written and oral presentations.

Linguistics majors are encouraged to participate in faculty research and to develop independent research. Students often enhance their linguistic major through interdisciplinary studies in cognitive science, communication sciences and disorders, psychology, philosophy, international studies, mathematics, or computer science. Students with a strong record in their major courses and an interest in pursuing linguistics at the graduate level are encouraged to enroll in 400-level courses.

Programs of Study

- Linguistics Major [link]
- Linguistics Minor [link]
- Linguistics BA/MA [link]

All 200-level linguistics courses have an experimental requirement. Students may fulfill this requirement by participating in any combination of two one-hour experiments or video showings. The experiments will be part of ongoing departmental research and illustrate features of language structure and use relevant to topics covered in the core linguistics curriculum. Similarly, the videos will be on topics covered in the core curriculum.

LING 101-6 First-Year Seminar (1 Unit) WCAS First-Year Seminar
LING 220-0 Language and Society (1 Unit) Introduction to linguistic variation and change from a variety of perspectives on social processes. How language can be connected with social group membership and viewed as a tool used in social practice to construct identity. These issues are explored through the quantitative analysis of linguistic variation in a social context. Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area
LING 221-0 Language and Prejudice (1 Unit) Exploration of attitudes toward different accents, dialects, and speech styles in the US context. The relation between language and thought; how language may reflect or reinforce prejudice. Introduction to methods in linguistic research. Ethics Values Distro Area

LING 222-0 Language, Politics, and Identity (1 Unit) Role of language in constructing, preserving, and manipulating political and national identities. Topics include language discrimination, linguistic nationalism, language and religion, alphabet issues, dialect issues. Regional content varies. LING 222-0 and SLAVIC 222-0 are taught together; may not receive credit for both courses. Ethics Values Distro Area

LING 223-0 Language & Gender (1 Unit) Exploration of socially and linguistically significant differences in the language used by/about/to men and women, focusing on the role of language in constructing gender as part of local communities of practice. Taught with GNDR_ST 234-0; may not receive credit for both courses. Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area

LING 250-0 Sound Patterns in Human Language (1 Unit) Introduction to phonetics and phonology. Description and classification of speech sounds in terms of articulation, acoustics, and perception. Similarities and differences of sound patterns across languages. Introduction to speech technology. Natural Sciences Distro Area

LING 260-0 Formal Analysis of Words & Sentences (1 Unit) Formal structure of words (morphology) and sentences (syntax) in natural language. Biological basis of human language. Formal Studies Distro Area

LING 270-0 Meaning (1 Unit) How information is encoded in words and sentences and how speakers and listeners use language to communicate. Formal Studies Distro Area

LING 300-0 Topics in Linguistics (1 Unit) Topics in linguistic theory. Content varies. May be repeated for credit with different topic.

LING 312-0 Experimental Sociolinguistics (1 Unit) Experimental approaches to the social meaning of language. Discussion of sociolinguistic research questions best suited to the use of experimental methods. Investigation of theoretical and methodological contributions of experimental work to sociolinguistic theory. Social inferences based on language, social expectations’ influence on linguistic perception, roles of experiences, stereotypes and attitudes on language, awareness and control in sociolinguistic perception. Prerequisite: LING 220 or 250; graduate standing or consent of instructor. Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area

LING 315-0 Experimental Approaches to Word Form Processing (1 Unit) Experimental techniques and theoretical models for analyzing perception and production of spoken and written word forms. Access to the mental lexicon in perception and production. Prerequisite: any 200 level course in linguistics. Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area

LING 316-0 Experimental Syntax (1 Unit) Experimental methodologies and theories of sentence comprehension. Studies of syntactic structures in sentence comprehension. Prerequisite: any 200 level course in linguistics. Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area

LING 317-0 Experimental Pragmatics (1 Unit) Experimental methodologies for analyzing the role of context in utterance production and comprehension. Taught with PSYCH 460-0. Prerequisite: any 200-level course in linguistics or consent of instructor. Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area

LING 320-0 Sociolinguistics (1 Unit) Overview of classic and contemporary work in sociolinguistics. How quantitative methods in linguistics can be coupled with social theoretic
insights to engage questions in linguistic variation and change, stylistic practice, how language reflects, reinforces, or contests social inequalities.
Prerequisite: any 200 level course in linguistics; graduate standing or consent of instructor.
Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area
LING 321-0 Bilingualism (1 Unit)
Cognitive, linguistic, neuroscientific, and computational aspects of the acquisition, representation, and processing of two or more languages in an individual's mind/brain.
Prerequisite: any 200 level course in linguistics.
Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area
LING 327-0 Language & Sexuality (1 Unit) The use of language to construct sexual identity, focusing on the language of and about gay men and lesbians. Topics include heteronormativity, identity labels and categories, gender versus sexuality, and cross-cultural sexual diversity. Taught with GNDR_ST 327-0; may not receive credit for both courses.
Prerequisite: any 200-level course in linguistics or consent of instructor.
Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area
LING 330-0 Research Methods in Linguistics (1 Unit)
Methods of linguistic data collection, management, and analysis with an emphasis on the use of computational, experimental, and statistical methods.
Prerequisite: any 200 level course in linguistics, graduate standing or consent of instructor.
Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area
LING 334-0 Introduction to Computational Linguistics (1 Unit) Hands-on introduction to computational methods in empirical linguistic analysis and natural language processing.
Prerequisite: Basic programming experience is required, at the level of at least LING 300-0 (Intro to Text Processing and Programming for Linguists) or COMP_SCI 110-0 (Intro to Computer Programming).
Formal Studies Distro Area
LING 341-0 Language Typology (1 Unit) A comparison of varying and universal features of the world's languages.
Prerequisite: any 200 level course in linguistics, graduate standing or consent of instructor.
Formal Studies Distro Area
LING 342-0 Structure of Various Languages (1 Unit) Phonological, morphological, or syntactic structure of a particular language. May be repeated for credit with change in language.
Prerequisite: any 200 level course in linguistics, graduate standing or consent of instructor.
Formal Studies Distro Area
LING 350-0 Fundamentals of Laboratory Phonology (1 Unit) Sound patterns of diverse languages and their expression in articulatory and acoustic phonetics. Syllable structure, phonotactics, morphophonological alternation, stress. Fundamentals of laboratory methods and the quantitative analysis of speech data.
Prerequisite: any 200-level Linguistics course or consent of instructor.
Natural Sciences Distro Area
LING 360-0 Fundamentals of Syntax (1 Unit) Fundamental principles of theoretical syntax. Phrase structure, argument structure, movement operations. Emphasis on argumentation, hypothesis formation and testing, and analytic methods.
Prerequisite: LING 260-0.
Formal Studies Distro Area
LING 363-0 Making a Dictionary: The Northwestern Project (1 Unit) Creation of an online dictionary of Northwestern jargon, slang, etc.